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ABSTRACT

A teacher job satisfaction instrument was developed from a brainstorming session in Pennsylvania with 81 teachers representing 5 school districts from urban, suburban, and rural schools. The resultant 10-question job satisfaction instrument was incorporated into a longer questionnaire that included school-related issues; it was given to 114 different teachers, and results were converted into a numerical score for each based on personal and employment characteristics. The study goal was not to generate a numerical comparison score, but rather to expose areas of concern for individuals and the work situation. Findings revealed that pay did not appear to be a satisfier or dissatisfier, that interaction with students was the most satisfying factor, and that the majority of subjects would approve of their children following in their profession. Lack of administrative support was chosen as the most dissatisfying factor (23 per cent), and teachers were not happy with the State-mandated innovations of Outcome Based Education (OBE) and inclusion. (NAV)

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A Fresh Look at Teacher Job Satisfaction

A paper presented at the annual conference of the National Council of States on Inservice Education

November, 1995

Anaheim, CA

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Abstract

This study looks at some of the factors that 81 teachers in a brainstorming session determined were worthy of research as they relate to teacher job satisfaction. Some of the findings are interesting: pay does not appear to be a satisfier or dissatisfier, and the vast majority of teachers would approve of their children becoming teachers.

Dr. Robert Clarke

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Introduction

Job satisfaction research and the ensuing studies have had an interesting history. Such studies have been in progress for about 50 years, and the questionable relationship between satisfaction and performance continues to intrigue researchers.

The studies were originally based on the concept that a happy worker was a productive worker. If this truly is the case, then it behooves managers and administrators to find out what makes workers happy and to institute necessary reforms. This theoretical basis carries with it the implication that a worker who is dissatisfied will, as a way of expressing frustration, withhold energy and enthusiasm in the workplace.

Review of the Literature

Industrial Studies

As far back as 40 years, researchers such as Brayfield and Crockett (1955) and Herzberg et. al. (1957) concluded that there is no consistent or pervasive relationship between satisfaction and productivity. Herzberg et. al. (1957) was a significant and well-documented study, and, while finding very little relationship between the two variables, did conclude that further attention to the possible relationship between satisfaction and productivity was needed.

The assumption that satisfaction and performance are positively related has no doubt contributed to the large number of studies that have generated results contrary to the assumption. One of the motivators accounting for the large numbers of studies is undoubtedly the assumption that the two variables should be related, and further research will generate findings to prove the truth of the assumption.

It is interesting to note, as Rosenthal (1979) did, that there is a bias against publishing studies with nonsignificant findings because of the concern that they are probably not noteworthy. And, this is probably true of most research, but the satisfaction-production issue is an obvious exception. The vast majority of these studies find nonsignificant relationships. This appears to be related to the existence of a "debunking paradigm."

Brayfield and Crockett (1955) indicated that the first job satisfaction investigation was conducted by Kornhauser and Sharp in 1932. In order to keep a handle on the growing volumes of job satisfaction research, several summaries of the research findings have been written (Vroom, 1964; Srivasva et. al. 1975). These reviewers attempted to reinterpret the results of the various studies and thereby resolve the issue of a lack of correlation between satisfaction and production. The reviewers, however, were forced to conclude that they could not recognize a strong relationship between the variables.

In 1976, Glass developed a strategy which he called meta-analysis. This technique was the "statistical analysis of a large collection of analysis results from individual studies, for the purpose of integrating the findings." This reanalysis demonstrated once again that satisfaction and production are only slightly related to each other.

Studies of Teacher Job Satisfaction

In an interesting study in which they compared teachers in public and private elementary schools, Reyes and Pounder (1993) found that teachers in schools with a normative value orientation (private schools) had significantly higher teacher organizational commitment and job satisfaction than did schools with a more utilitarian

value orientation (public schools). Utilitarian organizations primarily use material rewards to control employee behavior. Normative organizations primarily use symbolic rewards to control employee behavior. These findings are interesting in light of the fact that salaries and benefits for private school teachers are usually substantially less than those of public school teachers.

Cohen et.al. found that the "culture" of a school and school "symbols" play a substantial role in school performance. Rosenblum and Louis (1981) found that schools with what can be described as normative culture or structure (use of symbolic rewards to control behavior) foster conservatism, and this attitude in turn helps these schools repel faddism and other short-term, misguided, and expensive programs and projects.

It appears that the findings of Reyes and Pounder support the findings of Cohen et. al. and Rosenblum and Louis (1981). Perhaps future managerial decisions in public schools should take into account the variables related to normative value orientation.

An interesting hypothesis was developed by Kanter (1977), who speculated that occupations have an emotional climate that can be transferred to family life. Voydanoff (1990) further emphasized that the relationship between job satisfaction and marital and family life satisfaction is reciprocal in that work and family life operate in a feedback fashion. In essence, this means that job dissatisfaction will cause stress at home which will lead to further job stress.

Vancouver, Millsap, and Peters (1994) studied job satisfaction in relation to "organizational goal congruence," which they defined as "the agreement between an individual's organization, namely peers and supervisors." This study was actually an

analysis of a subset of data from a study by Vancouver and Schmitt (1991), in which the researchers found that organizational goal congruence related to school teachers' job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and intentions to quit. In this study, organizational goal congruence was operationalized as the "degree to which a teacher agreed with the principal and with the other teachers."

The Vancouver, Millsap, and Peters study (1994) mentioned above recommended that future studies of job attitudes focus on the individual and on other units of analysis. The authors believe that the traditional individual- worker focus is too narrow, and that more insight can be gained from focusing on individuals as they interact with "constituency levels" simultaneously.

Summary

Job satisfaction research was characterized by Chapman and Chapman (1969) as an "illusory correlation," that is, there is a perceived relationship between two variables that we logically or intuitively believe should interrelate, but they in fact do not.

Job satisfaction research studies have been produced in substantial numbers for about 50 years, and there is still no generally accepted correlation between satisfaction and production. In spite of the bias against publishing "nonsignificant" studies, job satisfaction studies are published, and the vast majority have nonsignificant findings. Perhaps this phenomenon can be explained by the Herzberg et. al. (1957) recommendation that further attention to the relationship between satisfaction and production is needed.

The history of job satisfaction research has provided some interesting developments. In order to keep up with the large number of studies being published, several research summaries have been written. In 1976, Glass developed a strategy known as meta-analysis for the purpose of analyzing the results of individual studies.

Teachers' job satisfaction studies have, for the most part, followed the same historical trail as industry-related studies. One of the problems with teacher job satisfaction studies has been that instruments designed to elicit data in industrial settings have been used with teachers, and teachers jobs are very different in some ways from production-line jobs.

Some of the recent attempts to study teacher job satisfaction have focused on how employee behavior is controlled (normative v. utilitarian), and on the interrelationship between job satisfaction and marital and family life. An interesting perspective, although not entirely new, was developed by Vancouver, Millsap, and Peters (1994). These researchers looked at "organizational goal congruence," which they operationalized as the amount of agreement between the teacher and the principal and the teacher's peers.

Description of the Study

For the current study, 81 teachers representing five school districts that included urban, suburban, and rural schools engaged in a brainstorming session. Previous job satisfaction studies were reviewed, and possible strategies for determining job satisfaction were discussed. Eventually, the group agreed to 10 questions that related to teacher job satisfaction. These questions were then incorporated into a longer questionnaire that dealt with school-related issues. The results of six of the questions are reported here.

The purpose of the study was not to generate a numerical score that would indicate a level of job satisfaction across various personal and employment characteristics. The purpose was to expose areas of concern with individuals and with the work situation. The study is not intended to show a relationship between item responses and productivity, although further analysis of the data or future use of the items might be useful for that purpose.

The instrument was completed by 114 teachers enrolled in graduate classes during the summer of 1995. None of these respondents was in the brainstorming group of 81. The number of usable returns varies by item because some respondents did not follow directions, e.g., checking two responses when the directions called for checking only one. Results are reported in percents and raw numbers.

Data Results

Item #1 asked the teachers to check the single most satisfying factor in their teaching positions. It is noteworthy that 82 percent indicated "interaction with students." Also noteworthy is the fact that no teacher checked "students' parents or guardians." "Collegial relationships was checked by about 7 percent; "pay" was checked by about 2 percent; and "July and August" was checked by about 5 percent. The response "other" was checked by about 3.5 percent, and each written response was different.

It seems important to indicate the large number of responses for "interaction with students" because this is a somewhat generic term, and future research might be able to tease out specific interactions that teachers find rewarding. These data are in Table 1.

Item #2 asked the teachers to check the single most dissatisfying factor in their teaching positions. About 23 percent of the teachers indicated "lack of administrative support," and the same percentage indicated "other." Six of the 26 "other" responses seemed to be related to dissatisfaction with students' parents, but since that was a separate item, the six responses were not added to that category. The 23 percent for the two items cited represent the largest response categories.

Since the questionnaire limited the teachers to only one "dissatisfying" characteristic, we do not know if the respondents are dissatisfied by more than one work-related variable. Perhaps it would be more fruitful to ask the teachers to select the two or three most dissatisfying factors.

It is interesting that not one teacher indicated that "pay" was a dissatisfying variable. It may be because teachers are satisfied with their paychecks or because they are more dissatisfied by other factors. Data related to dissatisfying factors are in Table 2.

To get an overall "feel" for whether teachers are satisfied or dissatisfied, Items #3 and #4 asked the teachers if they would be happy if their 18 year old sons or 18 year old daughters planned to become teachers. It was assumed that the teachers would not want their children going into a profession in which they themselves were unhappy or dissatisfied. By a large majority (74% for sons and 79% for daughters), the teachers approved of their offspring becoming teachers. Future research studies might deal with questions such as: Why would you recommend that your son or daughter become a teacher? Data related to these items are in Table 3.

Steers and Porter (1991) indicate workers constantly appraise the work environment and develop an attitude based on the conditions. As working conditions change, individuals become sensitive to the shifts and adjust their attitudes in a positive or negative direction. When workers perceive that they have little control over the changing situation, they will develop negative attitudes. In order to determine if this phenomenon affects teachers, the teachers were asked to respond to two innovations (Items #5 and #6) perceived as top down mandates that are affecting their work environment.

The teachers were asked if they believed OBE should be voluntary or mandated, and if inclusion should be mandated. The researchers suspected that they could reasonably guess the results of these questions, but the questions were asked to determine how large the negative response for each item would be. The teachers' responses indicated that 93 percent would like OBE to be voluntary (Table 4) and 84 percent do not believe that inclusion should be mandated (Table 5).

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's position on these issues are items over which teachers have no control. Further, they are top down mandated changes that many teachers have had negative experiences with or have heard negative instances of their applications from colleagues. As such, they pose a threat or are dissatisfying aspects of their jobs.

Conclusions and Further Study

The data reported on the first two factors that were investigated namely the single most dissatisfying aspects of the teachers' jobs, proved somewhat surprising. The

overwhelming majority of respondents (82%) indicated that the most satisfying aspect of their job is their interaction with students. "Pay" was the most satisfying variable for only about 2 percent of the respondents. This is interesting because teacher pay has increased dramatically since the passage of the collective bargaining law, and teachers generally have better benefit packages than other workers.

The dissatisfying factors showed no strong trend toward any one factor, which could mean that there are multiple factors related to dissatisfaction. Again, it is interesting that "pay" also did not act as a dissatisfier. None of the teachers sampled indicated dissatisfaction with pay.

When teachers were asked if they would be happy if their 18 year old son or daughter wanted to enter the teaching profession, they overwhelming said "yes," which indicates that the teachers themselves have positive attitudes about the profession and about their jobs.

Teachers, like other workers, are more satisfied when they have some degree of control over their work environment. Teacher attitudes related to two mandated innovations, OBE and inclusion, indicate that the teachers are not happy with the mandates or how they are being implemented.

It appears that more research is needed on the entire topic of teacher job satisfaction. The non-role of "pay" as a satisfier or dissatisfier is confusing. The scope of dissatisfying variables needs more attention, especially in light of the fact that so many teachers would be happy if their sons or daughters wanted to enter the profession.

TABLE 1

Most Satisfying Variables of Teachers' Jobs

Percent (total = 100)	No. of responses (total = 112)	Item
7	8	1. collegial relationship(s)
2	2	2. pay
5	6	3. July and August
82	92	4. interaction with students
0	0	5. students' parents or guardians
4	4	6. other, please mention

TABLE 2

Most Dissatisfying Variables of Teachers' Jobs

Percentage (total = 100)	No. of responses (total = 112)	Item
2	2	1. collegial relationships
0	0	2. pay
18	20	3. inadequate materials
16	18	4. students' parents or guardians
23	26	5. lack of recognition
18	20	6. lack of administrative support
23	26	7. other

TABLE 3

Would you be happy if your son or daughter wanted to become a teacher?

	Item no. 3 Son (% and no. of responses)	Item no. 4 Daughter (% and no. of responses)
Yes	74% -- 84	79% -- 90
No	26% -- 30	21% -- 24
Total	100% -- 114	100% -- 114

TABLE 4

Should OBE be voluntary or mandated?

	Percent	No. of responses
Voluntary	93	106
Mandated	7	8
Total	100	114

TABLE 5

Do you believe that inclusion should be mandated?

	Percent	No. of responses
Yes	16	18
No	84	96
Total	100	114

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